



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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President Nez and Utah Lt. Governor Henderson visit Westwater Subdivision residents and the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter

BLANDING, UT – On Thursday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez met with Utah Lt. Gov. Diedre Henderson, Utah State Treasurer Marlo M. Oaks, Utah State Sen. David P. Hinkins (R-Dist. 27), Utah State Rep. Phil Lyman (R-Dist. 73), and San Juan County, UT Commissioner Kenneth Maryboy, to hear from Navajo families who live without electricity and running water in the Westwater Subdivision, located near Blanding, Utah. The 120-acres of land was purchased by the Navajo Nation in 1986, and still lacks basic infrastructure for the homes of 27 Navajo families.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Utah Lt. Gov. Diedre Henderson, and Utah State Treasurer Marlo M. Oaks talk with Navajo residents in the Westwater Subdivision, near Blanding, UT on July 22, 2021.

President Nez and Lt. Gov. Henderson have made it one of their priorities to deliver water and power to the homes, which will require coordination from the state, county, and other entities. The Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources and Navajo Tribal Utility Authority are currently evaluating several options to determine the most feasible way of constructing the infrastructure needed to deliver water to the homes.

“Since Lt. Governor Henderson took office in January, she has shown great support for the Navajo Nation and our people. Today’s visit was an opportunity to show her the conditions that many Navajo families live in everyday and we know that this is the case for many people across the Navajo Nation. By having everyone at the table together, we have a unique opportunity to deliver clean water to families and communities. We appreciate Lt. Governor Henderson, Treasurer Oaks, Senator Hinkins, Representative Lyman, Commissioner Maryboy, and Mr. Larry Echohawk for joining us for today’s visit and for their persistence and commitment,” said President Nez.

This year, the Utah State Legislature approved \$500,000 in the state’s FY 2022 budget to help bring electricity to the Westwater Subdivision, which was then signed into law by Utah Gov. Spencer Cox. Navajo Tribal Utility Authority is currently working with Utah Associated Municipal

Power Systems and the city of Blanding on several options, including the possibility of extending powerline infrastructure from Blanding's electric system to the Westwater Subdivision.

Following the tour of the Westwater Subdivision, the group visited the newly reopened Gentle Ironhawk Shelter for victims of domestic violence. On June 6, under the leadership of Navajo Nation Division of Social Services Executive Director Deannah Neswood-Gishey, the Navajo Nation entered into a four-year lease agreement with the Utah Navajo Health Systems, which is currently working on upgrades to the building's security and structure.

UNHS anticipates to begin operations once all the staff are hired, and all the logistics are set in place. The shelter will offer 24/7 shelter services to victims of domestic violence and their dependents, through referrals to resources, transportation, ongoing support services to victims, counseling, behavioral health and medical services at the local UNHS clinic.

During the visit, President Nez thanked the UNHS board members, Division of Social Services, victim advocates, and many others who worked hard to finalize the lease agreement for the shelter. He said the reopening of the shelter facility will serve as a place of healing for families and victims of domestic violence, including those who are suffering from the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Utah Lt. Gov. Diedre Henderson, and Utah State Treasurer Marlo M. Oaks with Utah Navajo Health Systems Board members at the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter in Blanding, UT on July 22, 2021.

"I'm proud of the collaborations and partnerships that helped move this initiative forward, so that we can provide support and assistance to the mothers, daughters, sisters, and many others who are victims of violence. As we emerge from the pandemic, our administration is determined to establish more mental health facilities and other services to help our people who are dealing with modern-day monsters like substance abuse and addiction, domestic violence, depressing, suicide, and others. We have to continue working together with the state of Utah and other partners to support the people," added President Nez.

Utah Navajo Health Systems continues to provide upgrades including new furniture, appliances, and other improvements to the shelter to support clients who seek shelter services. For more information contact DSS Department for Family Services Department Manager III, Regina Yazzie at (928) 871-6619 or Delilah Goodluck, Communications Manager for the DSS Office of the Executive Director at (928) 871-6851.

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